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# THE CHALLENGE OF DEFERMENT

With the last of the college commencements of June 1951 the Veterans' Bulge will have ended. There will, of course, still be veterans in college; veterans with G. I. benefits; but the great numbers who came from the services to the campuses, doubling in many cases all previous peaks of enrollment, will have come and gone, leaving behind them a record that constitutes an epoch in education. A great faith has been justified; the doubts and fears of skeptics have been thoroughly disproved. Education for future usefulness has been demonstrated to be the best bonus, the best form of compensation for military service, that has ever been devised. The country's gratitude was expressed, not in the form of a donation to be squandered, but as an opportunity to attain life long capacity for better living, through persistent effort and sacrifice. Those of you who embraced that opportunity, you and your wives and your families, know the effort and the struggle,

but you also know the joy of accomplishment and the satisfaction of having something that cannot be taken from you.

The program of veteran's education was a challenge both to students and to colleges; and it was successfully met. But I speak of it today, not only to note that success, and to congratulate you, but to see it as the precursor of a new challenge which has come to students still in college and to the institutions in which they are enrolled. That challenge is the challenge of deferment.

The dawn of lasting peace, which we all hoped we saw with the defeat of Germany and Japan, has been darkened by clouds which, at worst, may portend another and more terrible war and, at best, foreshadow a prolonged period of international tension which, for the present, we call The Emergency. The vision of "One World", so eloquently presented to us a few years ago, has not yet come to reality; reluctantly, but definitely, we must recognize two Worlds, Worlds which, for the moment, seem traveling in the same orbit but in opposite directions with consequent possibilities of catastrophic collision. The great debates, in which we now are all absorbed, concern themselves with methods, with the

question of how we can resist the impact of the World opposed to ours, and yet maintain in our own World the things that make our lives worth while. Few, if any, question the danger. All, or nearly all, agree that, to ward off the peril, we must muster our strength, and be prepared, if peaceful measures fail, to counter force with force. Where only strength commands respect we must be strong, and ready.

In the debates over methods many of us, I am sure, have become confused about causes and feel that the frustration of our hopes for normal living is a vain sacrifice to the ineptitude of leadership or the fateful play of blind forces beyond all human control. I can well understand this feeling. Leadership has lacked much that we could wish; and the forces, springing from the surging aspirations of all the peoples of the earth, are so varied, so complex, and, at times, so strange, as to defy ordinary comprehension.

But it is possible, I think, to distinguish among the vague shadows of confusion the larger outlines of the major issues.

We can see that World War I and World War II and the present Emergency are not separate episodes, but successive acts in One World-wide drama. In World War I the issue seemed clear; it was the sharp issue of political autocracy seeking to reassert itself in a World committed, as we then believed, to the onward march of democracy and political freedom. We fought "to make the world safe for democracy" and this simple issue commanded our understanding and our loyalty. This issue had implications which we did not then grasp.

The "safety" proved illusory. The peace of Versailles turned out to be a truce which we enjoyed in fancied "normalcy" while autocracy in another guise readied another and a more deadly assault. In World War II the issue was again the destruction of democracy, but this time with other vital implications spelled out; the attack was also upon the entire fabric of religion and morals upon which political democracy is woven. Religion, as we know it, and the cultivation of the personal and social virtues, so painfully nurtured through two thousand years,

were to be cast away in favor of a pagan philosophy of force and craft and expediency. Love and good will were weaknesses. Respect for personal dignity was a phantasy. Truth was a concept of no intrinsic value.

While the leading role in the opposing World has shifted from Germany to Russia, the issues which divide the "Two Worlds" today, I think, are basically the same as those in World War I and World War II with all the remaining and ultimate implications starkly clarified. In the other World, political autocracy appears in an even cruder form, religion and morals are more contemptuously discarded and, in addition, there is the elimination of private, individual initiative in the economic life of the people. Even the family as a species of private enterprise falls under the smothering power of the State.

In this perspective, it is clear that the danger is great and terrible. The issues are deep and vital. There are arrayed against us the numerical majority of the earth's people in a spreading conflict, which began decades ago, and will not cease until a new mental and moral equilibrium has been established.

The Emergency, even if it does not explode into global war, seems destined to long duration -- perhaps a life time -- in which our strength must be both real and manifest.

To create that strength, we must develop the latent resources of our nation and one of the chief of those resources is trained man power. The human race being what it is, man power in the strictly military sense means young man power with the accent, in the last analysis, upon youth rather than upon sex. It is ironic, even tragic, that older people make the wars and younger people fight them, but no other practical system has yet been found, and in all fairness, it must be believed that older people do not commit their children to the dangers of war more readily than they would commit themselves.

Now, it is obvious that in the array of the One World against the other, which for the time we seem powerless to prevent, our man power is vastly inferior in point of numbers. Not only are those we can muster but a fraction of the potential opposition, but the cost of maintaining a man in our forces is many times the cost of maintaining one in theirs. The conclusion is as obvious as

the premise -- man for man our forces must be more effective, many times more effective, if our World is to survive upon the earth. We cannot claim any great physical superiority; the necessary effectiveness must come from mental superiority which, through science and appliance, can multiply human strength; and through moral superiority which can infuse our strength with the ideals for which we stand.

The possibilities of such effectiveness are no longer open to question. With fewer hours in the day and fewer days in the week devoted to productive labor, our output of civilian goods has been such as to raise the standard of American living far above that of any other people. The same capacity to invent and produce enabled us in World War II to fight simultaneously on two fronts thousands of miles apart, and to supply our allies with weapons and equipment at the same time. Man for man we can be more effective if we develop our potential strength.

This brings us to the question of Deferment. Deferment presents an arguable question. Should some young people be permitted to continue in college, thus, for the time, escaping the

disciplines, privations and dangers of military service, while others, of like age, are required to give such service to their country? It appears to be the judgment of those in public authority that some young people should be so deferred, and the reasons seem to be these:

First, the reasoning goes, Deferment is postponement, not exemption. If a student, eligible for Deferment, chooses to go to college he remains subject to the same period of military service at the end of his school training. This, in the case of professional students, doctors for example, is a serious consideration; for it postpones perhaps for ten years or more, the time when he can expect to engage in normal civilian practice.

Second, it is indispensable to the attainment of manpower effectiveness, referred to a moment ago, that there be continuously produced and available the requisite number of trained minds. Were the Emergency likely to be of brief duration, we might risk the chance that those already trained could carry on, producing materiel in adequate volume and of latest design. But, so far as can be judged, the Emergency is likely to be of long

duration. The supply lines of trained people, no less than the supply lines of goods and weapons must remain filled, lest a time come when our effort fail for want of the one thing that can bring us success.

Third, to continue with the reasoning, Deferment on the basis of initiative and capacity is a safer reliance than Deferment on the basis of screen tests applied to all inductees. Going to college is an indication of initiative and capacity. There are those who argue that college attendance is less a matter of initiative or capacity than of family position and wealth. There is some weight in the argument. But, when consideration is given to the very large percentage of college people who go through on their own efforts, the argument is not conclusive. There is much in the point that those who go to and manage to stay in college are likely to be persons of more initiative and better minds.

The tests for college deferment in the current regulations moreover are somewhat more rigorous than the colleges themselves enforce. About thirty-five per cent of the average

freshman class fail to become sophomores leaving sixty-five per cent who do. Under the draft law only the upper fifty per cent survive. About eighty-five per cent of the sophomores normally become juniors. Under the draft law, sixty-six and two-thirds per cent may remain. More than ninety per cent of the juniors normally become seniors; under the draft law only seventy-five per cent continue in school.

Fourth, it is reasoned, the prosecution of modern warfare, highly integrated as it must be with civilian production, requires a great number and a great variety of specialized capacities, ranging from modern languages to modern physics, and the necessary specialization is better achieved by allowing earnest students to make their own choices than by attempting to assign them to prescribed courses in advance. Certainly, this practice is more in accordance with the genius of free democracy which we are seeking to preserve. Of more immediate importance, perhaps, so far as national defense is concerned, is the consideration that only through freedom to follow the mind's bent can progress, invention and new discovery be attained. In the kind

of warfare which relies on mental superiority, the only security is in keeping ahead. We were ahead in the production of the atom bomb. Nuclear physicists require a good many years to train. Is it conceivable that, say, fifteen years before Hiroshima, any considerable number of people would have been assigned to study and research in an area then regarded as fanciful, impractical and futile? If we are looking forward to a long emergency, it seems difficult either to attempt to forecast the young student's own best line of development or to predict what the future may hold in scientific and practical progress.

These, as I apprehend them, are some of the reasons upon which the current plan of Deferment rests. They seem necessary to its understanding and I am not now concerned with their support or their refutation.

My concern is with the responsibility which this plan of Deferment puts upon American youth of college age and upon American colleges and universities.

In a time when man power for the armed forces is raised by nationwide conscription, the only justification for departure from uniformity is the safety and welfare of the country. The principle of "Selective Service" recognizes the need for the pursuit of specialized callings even in war, and that some civilian pursuits may have higher military value than service in uniform. The mining of coal, the production of food are familiar examples. The inclusion of students of draft age in these categories of higher value, even for the postponement of military service, casts a burden of justification upon both student and college.

Such justification cannot rest upon the prosperity or even the survival of educational institutions. Important as they are to the future life of America, Deferment must not be allowed for their benefit.

Such justification cannot rest upon the desirability of maintaining a cultured class. In the grim struggle for survival as a "free" people, each must be prepared to give the best of which he is capable, and the only reason for giving anyone educational opportunities not available to all is that he may serve with greater effectiveness when his service is required.

I have no doubt that the willingness to trust both students and colleges with the responsibility implicit in Deferment is in some measure a tribute to their performance during the Veterans' Bulge. The record is resplendent and has undoubtedly inspired confidence for the future now before us.

With the incentive of personal advantage the student who is deferred may be expected to do well. With the realization that his Deferment is a trust, I feel confident he will do magnificently.

How well his opportunity for education may serve his country is, in a very large degree, dependent on the school to which he goes. The Deferment of students puts one of the most important elements of defense training directly into the hands of the colleges. From that training must come, e.g., developed capacity for research. A single research scientist may be worth as much as many regiments. From that training must come developed capacity for professional and expert service, e.g., in engineering, in the healing arts, in logistics, in the languages and customs of other peoples.

To give that training colleges and universities must be prepared to adapt themselves to changing needs. Courses and sequences may have to be altered or abandoned. Work may have to be accelerated so that trainees may become available sooner to take up the service for which they are fitted.

All this I am sure they will do as the needs become apparent. The same devotion that led them to assume the task of veterans' education as their particular war job will inspire them to even greater effort in the vital task of national preservation.

But their greatest responsibility, far transcending in importance the training of technicians and even scientists, is the responsibility for seeing that their students know what it is they are called upon to preserve. If, when spelled out, the issues of World War I, World War II, and the Emergency are the same, it is clear that the continuing struggle is for the earthly salvation of the individual soul.

For so many generations have we taken our individual freedoms for granted that I wonder whether we realize that our forebears did not always have them and that in the World opposed

to ours they are held wrong in principle and extinguished in practice.

I wonder whether we realize what living would be like where freedom to go from place to place, even places short distances apart, was subject to the permission of petty officials; where association with other people, even small groups of people, was constantly subject to espionage and dispersal by the police; where the choice of one's work was not one's own but was subject to official regimentation and coercion; where freedom of speech had no guaranty and where thought itself was controlled by controlling all sources of information; where personal dignity, the very core and center of the free man's living in our World, was shriveled and debased by the concept that the individual is wholly the pawn and creature of the State.

The business of a college or University is not propaganda but truth. Their means of disseminating truth is not by indoctrination but by free inquiry into facts, candidly presented in as objective manner as the sources of information will permit. In a proper university curriculum, there are no taboos except the taboos of bad taste and bad manners. Students in a free World

need to know about socialism and communism and the pseudo-democracy of the totalitarian states. They need to know about every form of economic and political organization and how they work. By the same token they need to know about individualism and free enterprise and free religion and all the personal freedoms that are indispensable to our forms of economic and political organization. Free inquiry is not propaganda; teaching about is not indoctrination. The facts will speak for themselves and, in my opinion, if the facts are candidly presented our World will not suffer by comparison.

But to present candidly and objectively the economic and political facts of either World, our teachers need to understand them. In a large measure, understanding comes from experience, experience that keeps abreast of current developments. A "dated" experience which reflects only the evils of capitalism fifty years ago may be as misleading to students now as a "dated" experience which reflects only the roseate hopes for communism equally outmoded.

What this nation is, this nation we are risking our lives to preserve, is in large measure the product of its colleges and universities. Without them and the swelling stream of trained young people who in years past have gone out from them, we should not now be the hope of the free World. General acknowledgment of this growing dependence is forthcoming on every hand. The generous provision made by our legislatures and the generous support given by private donors is evidence of the most cogent character. Deferment, with its challenge to students and to colleges, is the touchstone of the nation's trust.

You and the thousands of other graduates of this June throughout the land have lived your lives in times of tension and confusion. The end is not in sight. You are being called upon for service and sacrifice and to many of you the reasons are not clear. But you are still the envy of the youth of every other land, partly because you live better but chiefly because for you there is hope; and to reverse the ancient adage, while there is hope there is life.

To whom much is given, of him much shall be required. You have been given much, in things, in freedom, in opportunity. I have supreme faith that you will meet every requirement in return.